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A Radical Rethinking of Thanksgiving Leftovers

By **MARK BITTMAN**

Everyone (yes, literally) says that leftovers are “the best part of [Thanksgiving](#),” but I’m not psyched for dry meat on bread with a ton of mayonnaise, or even that exotic alternative, [cranberry](#) sauce.

And yet. There you are with four pounds of turkey, a pile of meaty bones, cranberry sauce destined to hang around until February and your grandmother’s stuffing, which wasn’t easy to make. Oh, and mashed potatoes, an always-challenging leftover.

Fear not. Here are 20 (you read that right) handy-dandy minirecipes designed to stimulate both your overindulged appetite and your tryptophanned-out brain. Although they may need adjustments based on your original recipes — stuffing, for instance: cornbread or Pepperidge Farm? — the range is broad enough for you to find a few things that work.



TURKEY

Turkey-Noodle Soup With Ginger

Cook chopped onion, carrot, celery, garlic and ginger in neutral oil until soft, then add chicken or turkey stock and bring to a boil. Cook [pasta](#) in boiling salted water until almost done; drain and stir it into the soup, along with shredded turkey; heat through. Garnish: Parsley or cilantro.

Turkey Salad with Scallions and Spicy Mayonnaise

Toss shredded turkey with chopped scallions, celery and cilantro. Fold in mayonnaise and pimentón and chili powder or paprika to taste. Garnish: Cilantro.

Indian-Spiced Turkey-Lentil Soup

Cook chopped onion, carrot and celery in butter until soft. Add a sprinkle of curry powder and cook until fragrant. Add lentils, a bay leaf and turkey or other stock to cover. Bring to a boil; turn the heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the lentils are tender. Stir in chopped turkey and heat through. Garnish: Dollop of yogurt.

Pulled-Turkey sandwich

Whisk together ketchup (a cup or so), a splash of red-wine vinegar, chili powder, minced onion and garlic and some cranberry sauce if you like; add enough water to form a thin sauce. Cook over medium-low heat for 10 minutes, then stir in a pound of shredded turkey and heat through. Serve on toasted hamburger buns or rolls.

Turkey Seco Tortillas

Spread shredded turkey in a single layer on a baking sheet. Toss with olive oil, minced garlic, cumin, coriander and/or chili powder. Bake at 300 for about 30 minutes, or until dried and crisp, stirring occasionally; serve with flour tortillas and the usual garnishes.



STUFFING

Eggs Baked in Stuffing

Pack a layer of stuffing into the bottom of a well-greased baking dish or ramekins. (If you have time for a layer of caramelized onions, even better.) Make indentations and crack eggs into them and sprinkle with grated Parmesan or other [cheese](#); bake at 375 until the eggs are just set, 10-15 minutes.

Stuffing-Stuffed Bell Peppers

Cut the tops off a few bell peppers and remove the seeds and stems. Pack a mixture of moist stuffing (add any flavorful liquid, if necessary), grated Parmesan and sautéed ground beef or pork into the peppers. Drizzle all over with olive oil and roast at 450 until the peppers are tender, about 30 minutes.

Savory Bread Pudding

Heat milk, a few tablespoons butter and some chopped fresh herbs until the butter melts. Beat one egg per two cups of stuffing, then slowly whisk in the milk mixture. Pour over crumbled stuffing, sprinkle a heavy amount of shredded Gruyère on top and bake in an 8-by-8-inch dish at 350 until browned and bubbly, about 50 minutes.

Pan-Fried Stuffing Cakes

For every 2 cups crumbled stuffing, stir in 2 beaten eggs and a little flour. Form into patties and cook in olive oil or butter until browned on both sides. Sauce: Whisk together equal parts sour cream and cranberry sauce.

Stuffing Breakfast Sausage

In a bowl combine stuffing, ground pork or turkey, chopped fresh sage and fennel seed. Form into patties, then cook in olive oil until the outsides are crisp and the inside no longer pink. Garnish: Maple syrup, cranberry sauce or a mixture of the two.



MASHED POTATOES

Mashed-Potato Pierogi

Cook chopped onion and garlic in butter until soft; stir into mashed potatoes. Fill wonton skins with a spoonful of the potato mixture (don't overstuff); fold over and seal the edges with a little water. Working in batches, sauté in butter, or steam, or fry in an inch or two of hot oil until golden brown. Garnish: Sour cream and chopped dill.

Mashed-Potato Gratin with Jalapeños

Cook chopped onion, garlic and jalapeños in olive oil until soft. Stir into mashed potatoes and pack into a greased baking dish. Sprinkle with shredded Cheddar and bread crumbs and drizzle with olive oil. Bake at 375 until browned and bubbly, about 15 minutes.

Garlic-Rosemary Potato Fritters

Cook lots of chopped garlic and rosemary in olive oil until fragrant. Stir into mashed potatoes along with beaten eggs (about 1 for every 2 cups) and enough all-purpose flour to bind. Form into patties (chill if time allows), then dredge in bread crumbs or flour and cook in olive oil until browned.

Mashed-Potato-and-Turkey Croquettes

Stir together mashed potatoes, chopped cooked turkey, chopped onion, beaten egg (about 1 per cup) and enough all-purpose flour to bind. (A little sage or thyme is good, too.) Roll into balls and dredge first in flour, then in beaten eggs, then in bread crumbs. Cook in olive oil until browned all over. Serve with cranberry or applesauce and sour cream.

Turkey Shepherd's Pie

Cook chopped onion and carrot in butter or olive oil until soft. Stir in a little tomato paste, chopped cooked turkey, peas or other leftover vegetables and leftover gravy (or a spoonful or 2 of flour and some chicken stock); simmer until thick. Put the turkey mixture in a baking dish, spread mashed potatoes over the top, then top with crumbled stuffing or bread crumbs and a drizzle of olive oil or melted butter. Bake at 400 until golden brown. Garnish: Chopped parsley or sage.



CRANBERRY SAUCE

Cranberry-Yogurt Parfaits

In individual glasses, alternate layers of cranberry sauce, Greek yogurt, honey and chopped pecans. Garnish: Fresh mint.

Cranberry-Swirl quick bread

Combine 2 cups flour, 1 cup sugar, 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon salt in a food processor. Pulse in 4 tablespoons chilled butter. Add 3/4 cup buttermilk, 1 tablespoon orange zest and 1 egg and pulse just until combined. Pour into a greased loaf pan and swirl in 1 cup cranberry sauce with a knife. Bake at 350 until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean, at least 45 minutes.

Cranberry-and-Gruyère Grilled-Cheese Sandwich

Spread cranberry sauce on a slice of bread. Top with sliced Gruyère and a second slice of bread. Butter the outside of the sandwich generously. Cook in a skillet until the bread is golden brown and the cheese is melted.

Cranberry-Braised Chicken

Cook chicken parts in butter, rotating and turning as necessary, until browned on all sides; remove from the pan. Add chopped onion, garlic and ginger and cook until soft. Stir in cranberry sauce and a little chicken or turkey stock or white wine; add the chicken. Cover and cook over medium-low heat, turning the chicken occasionally until it's cooked through. Garnish: Orange zest.

Cranberry Negronis

Mix equal parts gin, Campari, vermouth and cranberry sauce in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake and strain. Garnish: Orange or lemon peel.



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